

## **Dead as Your Walkman by HavokDroid**

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** M/M

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Eleven, Jim Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Original Characters, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Jonathan Byers/ Male reader, Jonathan Byers/ Reader, Jonathan Byers/You

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### **Summary:**

Jonathan Byers and you were as close as two boys could be once.

Now you wouldn't be caught dead speaking with him.

But when your ex best friends brother goes missing, can you put your differences aside to find him? Can your relationship finally heal or will whatever's going on in Hawkins kill you before you get the chance?

# **1. I Dont Dream of Anyone Except Myself**

## **Author's Note:**

Each chapter is titled by a song lyric, songs will be linked in the end notes.

Know it's old to start from season 1 but I wanna look back on both seasons so bare with me.

(Y/n) felt the old metal of his locker as the squeaky swing of it as it opened barely registered in his sleep deprived mind. He felt numb to the world as he had yet to really wake to it, going through the motions this morning of throwing on his army coat, pressing the play button on his Walkman, and walking in the direction of his school to whatever song he was privy to that week, so routine he barely had to think.

He liked not thinking, especially when he had to pass by..that house everyday.

(Y/n) didn't like to dwell on the past so he slammed his locker in an attempt to jolt himself only to reveal Barb hollands.

(Y/n) always thought Barb was cool, she wore her hair real short and big round glasses which most people would've found dorky but Barb didn't care, she liked what she liked and (Y/n) could really appreciate that kind of quality in a person.

"Hey (Y/N), you busy after school? Me and Nanc were thinking of going shopping then maybe to grab a snack in town."

(Y/n) smiled, he knew Barb was trying to get Nancy wheeler and him to get to know each other better, she wanted all of them to be friends, but (Y/n) and Nancy just didn't click right away and he supposed they never would, but he was glad she made the effort to invite him out even if he had to say no.

"Sorry B, it's Wednesday, gotta tutor."

Barb groaned realizing she'd forgotten

"Do you have to? Can't you just skip one day? Maybe even just end it early? I'll pick you up in my car even."

(Y/n) thought it over, he supposed ending tutoring early couldn't hurt, he could pull some kind of excuse he usually only got two kids between the other volunteers..

"I'll think about it and let you know by lunch, I gotta run though I got English."

Barb smiled triumphantly, giving (Y/n) a quick pat on the shoulder as they parted in the hall

"Okay I'll see you at lunch then, lemme know."

(Y/n) went through most of his day no problem, but now he was in his fifth period history class, the one class he had with..him.

Jonathan Byers sat two rows away from him so usually he could avoid confrontation, looking at how they treated the other like the plague most people wouldn't ever guess they'd once been best friends.

Sometimes he couldn't believe it either.

But that was eons away in the far off year of eighth grade, (Y/n) still remembered all the sleepovers and walks in the woods behind the Byer's home, it used to make his heart ache but now he was bitter.

They'd both made their own paths and had to go on living their lives. There was no true hate there he knew, but a hurt that could not be healed as Jonathan never acknowledged what he'd done.

He cringed inwardly remembering the scrapes that stung from the gravel on his hands, the cut, and Jonathan the quiet bystander.

(Y/n) shook his head as if to push the thought out of his brain, he always hated fifth period history because he was forced to think about dumb things like that and he was basically starving since it was

the period before lunch.

He'd thought it over all day and decided he'd take Barb up on her offer, he'd fake sick a half hour into his tutoring session and go have fun in town. (Y/n) didn't cut tutoring short often, he loved the kids they just needed help with homework and it was easy for him, something to look nice on a college application he surmised.

His teacher was talking something about group projects, the class was an odd number so (Y/n) could usually get away with working alone if he pleaded his case hard enough.

But that didn't seem to be happening today he quickly realized.

Not like he cared but Jonathan usually paired up with some guy the row behind him, Dave? Dean? Something with a D (Y/n) couldn't quite remember but what the problem was is DaveDean wasn't here today and everyone was paired up except-

“Mr. (L/n)! Looks like your streak of singular projects is coming to an end, you and Mr. Byers will be paired for this assignment.”

(Y/n) couldn't swallow, Jonathan didn't even turn around, his shoulders stiff under his soft grey tshirt, something old and trying to be forgotten fluttered in (Y/n)'s chest for a moment, he crushed it down fearfully as he looked at his teacher with pleading eyes

“Sir I'm not sure that's a good-”

“We'll do it.”

Jonathan cut (Y/n) off, turning to look him in the eye as if to say

“*Can't avoid me forever*”

And all this time he thought they were avoiding each other together, way to break the streak Byers.

The assignment was simple, write about the settlers of this town, pick a specific type like business owners or farmers and how they contributed, normal stuff, something (Y/n) could have written out in a heartbeat, and hopefully he could avoid as much interaction with

Jonathan as possible.

(Y/n) was heading to lunch to find Barb when he felt light tipped fingers brush against his exposed wrist.

He whipped his head around to see familiar sunken black eyes looking back at him, it put a bitter taste in his mouth as his chest jumped once again.

“So the project.”

(Y/n) didn't make eye contact

“What about it?”

“When do you want to meet up to do it?”

He couldn't be serious

“We're not, I'll do the report myself.”

Jonathan already looked irritated with

(Y/n)'s moodiness.

“Look I didn't choose for this to happen, Dick had a schedule change so we're stuck with each other whether you like it or not, I need a good grade too.”

So that was the kid's name, at least he was right about the D part.

“And you'll get one, when I write the report.”

“(Y/n).”

“Fine..you can draw pictures for the poster board.”

“Drawing! And I thought you were the artsy one.”

(Y/n) felt an ache building in the hollow of his chest at Jonathan's sarcasm, he knew it was just an offhand comment, but he hated that

Jonathan knew him, knew about his hopes and dreams, even simple things like his hobbies.

He wished he could just take it all back, keep it all inside so he wouldn't have to feel this way.

He breathed through his nose and began to step away.

"I'll write the report, you draw the pictures, we're doing farmers, don't fight me on this because you and I both know you'd rather have the easy part so if you pick up a shift unexpectedly it won't affect our project too much."

He pursed his lips likely having the same thought (Y/n) had just had, but nodded.

"I'll have it done by next Thursday so make sure you have something by then."

(Y/n) didn't let Jonathan answer as he rushed off towards the cafeteria, heart thumping so hard it hurt.

(Y/n) headed over to Hawkins middle school, it was right next to the High school so it was a short walk. (Y/n) tutored with two other students, some sophomore girls, in the library on Monday's and Wednesday's, but usually he'd have a little helper along with him.

"(Y/n)!"

(Y/n) smiled as Will Byers waved to his friends and rushed over to the teen, Will was like the little brother (Y/n) had always wished he'd had, they both loved fantasy and the kid could draw, just because (Y/n) and Jonathan didn't see eye to eye didn't mean Will wasn't still cool in his book.

Will looked up to (Y/n) a lot, because he liked all the stuff he did, he had enough comics to fill his closet and a glow in the dark Star Wars poster, but he was still super cool and it gave Will hope.

(Y/n) always tried to tell Will to be himself, because he remembered

when he and Jonathan were in middle school he'd always let other people's opinions get in the way of doing the things he actually liked and he couldn't live his life to the fullest that way.

Will was smart and loved books, (Y/n) loved the kid, so he let him tag along to tutoring even though he didn't need help. Usually Will would show kids the way he understood it as someone their age rather than someone older who's done all of this before, (Y/n) found it helpful.

Will held the straps of his backpack as he finally made his way up to (Y/n)

"Hey Willy, I'm not feelin too good today so we might have to cut tutoring short."

Will frowned at this news

"Are you sure you're sick?"

(Y/n) put his theatre two skills to the test as he suddenly coughed deeply and exaggeratedly, speaking in a whispery voice.

"Yeah, think I got a sore throat coming on, don't wanna get you guys sick yknow?"

He nodded as you two walked across the asphalt to the double doors of the library.

"So did I tell you about our new campaign Mike wrote?"

"Nope, tell me."

(Y/n) liked to let Will talk as much as he liked, he knew Jonathan and Joyce worked a lot so it was hard to give him the one on one he needed sometimes, but they were a good family (Y/n) knew that so he tried not to hold it against them.

(Y/n) only had one student to tutor and they were already finished with their work by the end of the 30 minutes, packing up to head home, Will still explaining some new drawing of his as (Y/n) walked him outside.

“You riding your bike?”

“Yep, hope you feel better (Y/n).”

“Thanks Willy, you get home safe now.”

“I will, I'll tell my mom and Jonathan you said hi.”

(Y/n) laughed, he knew Will only did that to see how Jonathan would react, Will wished the two were still friends and (Y/n) knew it, Will couldn't understand why they'd cut ties and he wasn't sure he could tell him really the full unabridged version, at least not today.

He sat on the curb waiting for Barb to pull up as an ache filled at the back of his head, a dull pulse like a tiny heartbeat, becoming a bass filled thrum in moments.

He heard an echoing scream of a young girl in his head, it felt so real he flinched, startled by it.

The world went dark for a second, like someone's dimmed the lights, he felt a chill as he heard the girls scream again. Barb parked in front of him honking loudly grabbing his full attention as the sun seemed to shine away the image.

“Cmon! Hop in the back we're going cruising.”

(Y/n) felt dazed but laughed anyway, what was that? Maybe a messed up daydream, he got a little too in his head sometimes he wouldn't put it past himself.

He slid into Barb's backseat and tried to take his mind off it with the soft croon of the radio and Barb and Nancy's chatter breaking up his thoughts.

(Y/n) got home around 7, his curfew was 9 so he was sure to be fine, he'd called his dad's shop to let him know where he was and who he was with, leaving the message on his machine as he was likely out working on the cars.

(Y/n)'s father owned an auto shop, he worked long hours making sure everything was right and keeping customer orders in the shape they should be, he'd usually miss dinner, (Y/n) had filled up at the diner while splurging his small allowance on food and a new Xmen comic.

He wrote a note to his dad he'd ate with his friends so he would heat him up some leftovers or make him a sandwich when he got home.

(Y/n) got undressed, flinging his army green coat onto the wrack and unlacing his bulky black boots, letting them fall from his feet with a clunk at the foot of his bed.

He threw on some pajamas and slipped under the covers, flipping on his lamp light to read a book.

(Y/n) must have not realized how tired he was as he fell asleep a few pages in, he awoke and everything was dark, he didn't think much of it for a second but he realized it was dark in a different way. The air felt syrupy but cold, everything felt almost stagnant as the air moved around it.

He tried to read the time but his clock was acting strange, maybe the one in the kitchen would work? (Y/n) found himself slipping out of bed only to feel shivering cold immediately, the wood floor feeling like shocking ice against his bare feet.

Each step echoed and his doors squeaking shut echoed throughout the house, everything felt weird, he never remembered the house being this cold.

(Y/n) shivered as he called out for his dad, hoping he'd know what was going on.

His voice sounded lost and hollow as it clung to his walls, he had to be dreaming this couldn't be-

He heard the scuttling of some kind of creature outside his living room window, he was used to a raccoon or a possum but this was something else, it moved alien like behind the fogged cold glass, his

chest went cold with fear as he turned on his heel and ran back up his stairs, only to trip.

(Y/n) waited for the crash of his chin against the stair but upon impact there was no pain, he woke up in a cold sweat.

He was confused for a moment, but he realized it was warm and cozy in his room, moonlight streaming in the window and the sound of late night television muffled downstairs, his dad probably asleep on the couch.

“Must've been a nightmare..”

(Y/n) didn't dream much, he hasn't had a real nightmare since he was about 14, he had good reason then but nothing had happened that would insight something like...that. It was like a dark realm version of his house, his home had always felt safe but maybe his brain knew something he didn't? He brushed it off as a one time thing and tried to get back to sleep.

(Y/n) felt exhausted, he hadn't gotten much sleep the rest of the week, he'd tried to nap all Saturday but that dark cold house kept coming back, so now it was Sunday, he was in the back in his shed.

(Y/n)'s shed was sort of his makeshift art studio, his dad got a sheet metal shack to keep his tools in because it'd hold up better to summer storms, he let (Y/n) take the old wooden shed for himself. His canvas was grey and cold as he brushed over the somehow corpse like trees, trying to empty his head of the image so maybe he could forget and go back to having a normal night's sleep. His eyelids drooped, heavy as his head bobbed, he was blasting music into his ears from his Walkman, he didn't want to hear anymore screams or scuttling legs, he was trying to keep himself awake, the sun was coming down slow as it sheeted the sky in a slow spreading navy blue he knew would soon become black.

He needed to go inside, the dark landscape on his canvas sprang back at him warning him of what he'd see if he did go to sleep, he couldn't avoid it forever he knew he felt like he'd drop right now if it wasn't

for the paint fumes causing him discomfort. He washed his brushes and threw his smock onto his desk, leaving his easel out as he slunk into the yard, lazily lowering his headset to his neck.

He struggled for a moment, the world seeming to shake and switch off for a moment, the sky black then once again blue, he must've been really tired for his eyes to be playing tricks on him. His head felt like a buggy tv all the way to his house, he slumped against his kitchen wall, trying to focus on what was real, he knew sleep deprivation could make someone hallucinate, his house flipped back and forth between warm safety to dark uncertainty. (Y/n) started to hyperventilate, feeling overwhelmed until the phone ringing broke into his episode.

He focused on the green kitchen phone as it rang twice, he edged towards it, grabbing it off the hook as he cautiously lifted it to his ear.

“Hello?”

“(Y/n) it's Jonathan.”

(Y/n) sighed in relief, unsure what he'd expected to be on the line, but he was glad it was a more grounded and real fear like Jonathan rather than his hallucinations.

“Hey Byers, didn't think you'd be calling.”

“Yeah.. well I'm taking an extra shift at work and-”

“Did you finish the poster?”

“No, but I swear it'll be done before the presentation I just need the extra cash.”

(Y/n) wanted to snap at him and be angry but one thing he knew is the Byers scraped by most of the time, and he'd prepared for something like this, he'd cut him the slack this time.

But only this time.

“Fine, just get it done Byers, see you in fifth period.”

“Wait-”

(Y/n) had lowered the phone but pulled it back at the sound of the outburst.

“What?”

The line was quiet for a second

“You want to come over for breakfast tomorrow? We can go over our work then..”

(Y/n) yearned for a time where he wouldn't even think about it and be over at the Byers home without question, walking to school with Jonathan, swapping comic books and talking about cool stuff they'd seen on the TV guide they could both check out..just being the best of friends two boys could be.

But he couldn't forget the rift between them and why it was there, the wound almost felt fresh as his finger brushed the short pink scar on his right cheekbone. His melancholy replaced by bitterness.

“Can't, see you in class.”

He hung up the phone before Jonathan could say another word, while the distraction had been welcome, his chest was aching as he stormed upstairs, he needed some damn sleep.

(Y/n) finally felt comfortable, snuggled in his soft sheet in that sweet precipice between consciousness and unconsciousness, he was thinking more about Jonathan than..his nightmares, it was easier to worry about him, it was familiar and at least he knew how to talk himself down out of that, it was something he had almost two years of practice doing.

His brain crept anyway, pulling up a good memory (Y/n) decided just to let himself have.

He'd been about 13, it was Friday night and his dad given him his allowance earlier that afternoon, letting him bike over to the Byers'

for a sleepover as he'd be out later than usual and he'd rather his son be with a friend than alone eating junk on the couch at home.

(Y/n) bought candy and soda so he could eat junk on the Byers couch instead. It was going to be a night for the books, there was going to be a double creature feature on channel 8 and a noir film on channel 10 straight after, (Y/n) and Jon had board games and comic books stacked on the small coffee table to keep themselves entertained until the movies started.

Will curiously fingered through one of

(Y/n)'s Xmen issues , most older siblings groaned at the thought of their younger sibling hanging around when they had a friend over, but Will was cool for a nine year old so they'd let him stick around for a little bit.

Joyce was slipping on her work shirt as she walked into the living room, happy to see you all settled rather than horsing around.

"Boys there's chicken fingers in the oven for you, Jonathan make sure Will is in bed by 8:30, and I'm serious this time he gets so cranky when he stays up late."

Wills ears flushed with embarrassment,

(Y/n) knew he probably didn't like his mom advertising he still had a bedtime.

"Moom but-"

"No buts, in bed by 8:30."

She ruffled his hair, seeing he was frowning she tickled his sides and gave him a mess of kisses, he giggled pushing her away. She passed behind the couch and patted Jonathan on the head

"You don't stay up too late either, you and (Y/n) can watch your movies but I want you at least getting ready for bed by 11 okay?"

Jonathan nodded and she gave you a smile

“You boys have fun, I’ll be back the usual time.”

She headed towards the door and Jonathan called

“Bye mom.”

As the screen door swung shut it seemed to a signal for your night to begin.

The boys played games and ate so much junk they were basically about to crash, it was 10 and Will had been in bed some time but Jonathan insisted on checking on him.

(Y/n) saw how caring Jon was with his brother, quietly opening the door and making sure he was tucked in just right, giving him a gentle good night kiss as not to cause him to stir, (Y/n) always admired that about Jonathan.

“Wanna see if we can get any scrambled channels?”

While usually (Y/n) was down to venture the path of trying to intercept some late night cable porn, he actually felt pretty tired. He yawned stretching his arms until he felt a satisfying pop.

“Nah, I’m beat, maybe we should just lay down.”

Jonathan either realized his own tiredness coming over him or just wanted to appease (Y/n), and lead him down the hall to his room. The boys had been friends since fourth grade so they didn't really mind sharing a bed, but (Y/n) felt a new feeling he'd only discovered recently as he watched Jonathan changing into his pajamas. He tried his best to ignore it as they slipped under the covers, his sweaty palms flush against the cool bed sheets. Jonathan wiggled around, getting comfortable, then there was a long silence, (Y/n) was so tired but his heart was thumping so hard in his chest it was hard to fall asleep.

Jonathan was something he didn't exactly want to say outloud but in his head he definitely fell under a category that could only be labeled “Crush”.

He felt a hot shame lave over his skin, he turned away from admiring

his friends face, not wanting to take advantage of their friendship this way, he'd realized some time ago he looked at guys differently than he'd ever looked at girls, sure girls were pretty but he never felt his palms clammy with sweat or his heart rate pickup from a waft of a girls hair, but when Jonathan grabbed his hand or slung his arm around him he felt his stomach whirl and wile with a want he didn't fully understand.

He remembered when Jonathan had made him a mixtape for his cassette player at home, he'd had a strong urge to kiss him, he ran off and didn't speak to Jonathan for days after having the thought.

It scared him, he didn't think anyone else felt this way, he was alone and he'd have to keep his secret from everyone, especially Jonathan. His ears felt hot as Jonathan unconsciously snuggled closer to him, he swallowed and tried to sleep.

He could never know, no one could ever know.

(Y/n) had thought this was a good memory but nothing was untouched by his discovery so long ago, it wasn't as scary as it once was, he'd met others like him, knew where they met and what was a safe space, but he still kept it to himself, if someone knew and they didn't bother him it wasn't a big deal but he wasn't really ready to advertise it like some of the older guys a county over encouraged him to do. He couldn't after what had happened.

After what Jonathan let happen.

He tossed and turned and finally fell into a fitful sleep, he just wanted to sleep without nightmares and no more Jonathan Byers creeping into his skull.

He was back in that place, it's cold jolting him in this flipped dream realm.

He tried to calm down, understand it was a dream, (Y/n) could do that sometimes, if he knew it was a dream it would usually change

and shift into nonsense rather than this nightmare scape.

He was in the woods, barefoot, clenching the fabric of his soft shirt hoping to ground himself as he walked slowly through the shadow of the trees. He heard growls and titters, he kept repeating in his head on loop hoping it would wake him up or save him.

*'It's only a dream'*

The world felt so barren but then he saw her.

She saw him, she was young, maybe 11 or a little older, she was in a hospital gown, her hair buzzed to the scalp like a boys, she seemed so scared as they locked eyes, she was covered in dirt and looked so tired, he reached out to her but she ran like a spooked rabbit, the echo of her scream wrapping around him he couldn't help but run himself. He ran through what was now a ghost of his hometown, it was empty and ugly, his lungs felt full of debris, he wasn't sure what any of this was anymore as he began to approach a familiar trail.

(Y/n) found himself in front of the Byers home, all he heard was a gunshot, and the wet splitting screech of an unknown creature.

(Y/n) woke yelling, his father shaking him in his cold sweat.

"What's gotten into you boy?"

He didn't answer right away trying to catch his breath.

"Bad dream, sorry for waking you pop."

"Not a big deal, you were hollerin' down the hall, was worried about you for a second son."

He smiled at his dad's soft voice.

"I'm okay pop.."

He wasn't sure if he was really okay, but he wasn't sure, what had he seen in his dream?

What was going on in the Byers house?



## 2. Everybody's Looking for Something

Will Byers was missing.

(Y/n) didn't believe it, that morning he'd been gnawing his way through a piece of toast, still barely conscious as his father took their phone off the hook.

"No Joyce, (Y/n) did you see the Byers kid, Will yesterday?"

(Y/n) shook his head.

"No pop, haven't left the house all weekend."

(Y/n)'s Dad relayed the information to Joyce, she seemed to be frustrated as they mutually ended the conversation, it left (Y/n) worried and confused in his tired state.

He remembered his dream, how weird it had been, was it a coincidence? A premonition? What did his dreaming self know that he couldn't understand when he was awake?

"Seems like the boy never came home from a friends house, sure it'll turn out just fine, not many places to hide or get lost in a town so small."

(Y/n) nodded as his father gunshotted the rest of his black coffee, mumbling about 'gettin to the shop' leaving his son with a ruffle to the hair and a loose promise of seeing him at dinner.

The gunshot still rung in (Y/n)'s ears like it was real, the darkness in the Byers home, and that screech.

Will couldn't really be missing, could he?

The next day was rocky in Hawkins, Will Byers was officially missing, there was gossip galore on what possibly could have happened but no

one was really sure.

Unfortunately a lot of people seemed to be sure of who the main target of their cooked up fantasies and scenarios was.

Jonathan was stapling up a missing poster of his brother, (Y/n) felt his heart sink at the sight, Jonathan had always been a good big brother, putting Will first and shielding him from hurt, be it from bullies or the wishy washy affections of their so called father. (Y/n) couldn't imagine the sea of turmoil going on in his mind as he looked at the printed photo.

"How much you wanna bet he killed him?"

(Y/n) realized the conversation he'd caught wind of, Tommy, Hawkins high asshole, was taunting Jonathan behind his back when he was literally trying to raise awareness for his brothers disappearance.

Steve Harrington pushed him, telling him to shut up, not quite condemning his actions, (Y/n) wanted to say something more, make Tommy feel sorry for even joking about something like that, but he had enough history with the guy, no sense in picking a fight.

Let sleeping dogs lie as they say.

(Y/n) watched as Nancy walked up to Jonathan, he was prepared to be angered but she seemed to only give off a kind vibe, trying to put Jonathan at ease, he finally realized all the things Barb had said about her were true.

(Y/n) trekked up as they separated, not caring much whether he'd be late to first period. He wasn't sure it was his place, he'd left the position of Jonathan's best friend behind years ago and had no plans of trying to rebuild that bridge, but he felt the need to give the same support in that moment, he would get a lot of sympathy from strangers, but (Y/n) knew Jonathan needed a friend.

"Jon.."

"What do you want (Y/n)."

"Do you have anymore posters you need to put up? I can help if you need me to."

Jonathan looked at him angrily

"You can't just ignore my for a couple years and then jump back in like we're buddies when you feel bad for me."

(Y/n) pursed his lips

"Listen Byers, sure we don't have the best history, even as of late, but I care about Will and you know damn well I do, I'm willing to put our differences aside for the moment so we can work on finding him, now do you want my help or not?"

Jonathan seemed apprehensive, but opened up my like a weary flower at the feeling of (Y/n)'s hand on his shoulder, he'd never admit it out loud but he had wanted to rush to him as soon as he realized his brother was missing, search every nook and cranny of the town because he knew (Y/n) would, that (Y/n) cared about and understood his family.

He'd been his best friend so long it was still hard to adjust to life without him, not being able to go to him, he knew why (Y/n) didn't talk to him and maybe he deserved it.

Sometimes he wished so hard he could go back and fix it.

But other days he was angry, he felt abandoned, it was supposed to be him and (Y/n) against the world, they'd made an oath in middle school, and oath of brotherhood, an oath of friendship, they'd sealed it in blood and they both regretted it as they sliced open their palms with the needle from (Y/n)'s bottle cap pin. It was meant to represent their loyalty and friendship, they'd seen it on tv and read about it in books, they were twelve it seemed like a good idea at the time. Jonathan still remembered walking to school together, biking over on Christmas Eve to exchange presents and promising to call when they were opened Christmas morning, swapping comics at their secret hang out, long before Castle Byers was created just for Will.

Jonathan remembered watching blood spurt from (Y/n)'s nose and the click of a switchblade.

He saw (Y/n) now, older, he seemed so different, he'd ran off and become cool without Jonathan, ignoring his existence, but right here right now he saw the same homely welcoming glimmer of his best friend in (Y/n)'s eyes.

"C'mon Jon..I just wanna help find Will safe."

He finally relented, giving (Y/n) a few missing posters to hang around town. (Y/n) started heading to class, bidding Jonathan goodbye, saying to call if they were going to have a search party anytime soon.

Jonathan felt unsure, but he blurted it out before he could stop himself.

"Do you really wanna help?"

(Y/n) stopped in his tracks and turned on his heel, looking to Jonathan in curiosity.

An announcement for an assembly in support of the Byers family played on the intercom as Jonathan pulled (Y/n) out into the parking lot, he imagined he'd take this journey alone but his anxious heart had other plans.

Jonathan was the eldest child, ever since his parents had split up he really hadn't been able to indulge in comfort or coddling, he had to be there for Will, be there for his stressed and overworked mother, he learned to cook, clean, sew, anything to help out around the house. He prides himself on being independent but sometimes it was so hard, sometimes it felt like he was going to break down and never start up again, seeing his mother cry over a stack of bills trying to decide which one can wait, and seeing his brother try to hide the bruises his bullies inflicted, he knew he didn't have the luxury, he always had to be strong for them.

But he didn't have to be strong with (Y/n), back when they were

friends he could soften up, he could cry, he could talk about what was stressing him, what was hurting him, he could indulge in the comfort that was (Y/n), he'd always give Jonathan a long hug, validate his woes, promising to never tell a soul. He knew he shouldn't be looking for that right now, but..

He was scared.

Jonathan was so goddamn scared they were going to find his brother in a ditch somewhere, or that he was being hurt right now, or if he'd just missed him when he was looking in the woods and Will was close by, hurt, and alone.

What Jonathan was scared of most of all was, what if they didn't find Will at all?

So he held tight to (Y/n)'s wrist, trying to keep his tears at bay as he basically tossed him into the passenger's seat of his car.

"Jon, you sure about this?"

"Positive."

It was all he could think of, they'd searched the woods, he'd hung posters, Will had to be somewhere and Hawkins was getting smaller and smaller by the minute. (Y/n) nodded and Jonathan shut the door, sliding into the drivers side and starting the ignition, "Go Nowhere" spitting through the speakers as they pulled out of the school parking lot.

(Y/n) had only met Jonathan's father once when he picked Jonathan up from school in sixth grade, and even then he'd known he was scummy.

Lonnie was unshaven and spent more time trying to deter his sons from their supposedly 'unmanly' interests than actual parenting, he remembered when Jonathan had told him about one of the weekends he'd spent with his father when they were in fourth grade, how his father had taken him hunting, Jon hadn't wanted to but his father pressured him into killing a rabbit.

(Y/n) still remembered the thin sliver of a tear that escaped his friends eyes as he relayed the story to him, it obviously still stirred up deep turmoil within him, not so much the act itself, but the fact that his father forced him is what stuck with him most.

(Y/n) would've given anything to wring the guys neck a twelve, and now at 16 he sat in the passenger seat of his ex best friend feeling the same feelings trying to claw its way to the surface once again. Will never really talked about his dad like Jon had but (Y/n) knew kids, Will just wanted Lonnie's approval while Jonathan just wanted to wipe him from their lives.

"What makes you think Will would've went there?"

"I don't know but he hasn't been picking up the phone, I need to get it out of the way so I don't have to talk to him again."

Jonathan had hell in his eyes, not taking them off the road, but (Y/n) knew that fire, Jonathan could be shy and even awkward but when he was angry, god forbid angry with a goal, he burned a trail behind him that really only (Y/n) would dare follow back then, but here he was as the rain beat down on the decade old ford to search a strangers home for a boy he considered family.

God help Lonnie if they found him.

God help them if they didn't.

"Look around the back while I go inside."

Jonathan spoke numbly as he slammed the drivers side door, (Y/n) adjusted the collar of his army jacket, zipping it up as he stepped into the wet humidity.

(Y/n) felt the slight slide of the wet grass as he started to make his way around the dingy house, a week ago if someone told him he'd be not only willingly speaking to Jonathan Byers, but skipping school with him to snoop around at his father's house an hour out in Indianapolis, he would've called them a basket case.

He looked for signs of a child in the yard, Will's bike had been found back home so no luck there, the clothing line was empty, likely cleared off because of the rain. (Y/n) began peaking in windows when he heard the screen door slam and a man talking. He rushed to the front, scared that Jonathan would get into a fight with his father, (Y/n) didn't know what would happen between the two, Jonathan always seemed like a different person when it came to his father.

"You think I don't want to see you?"

Neither man had seen you yet, you held back on crossing the side of the porch, trying to read the situation.

"I know you don't."

(Y/n) felt young again in that moment, memories of how Jonathan was still affected years after the divorce. Will was always wondering when his father was coming to see them, while Jonathan was coming to terms with the fact that he barely wanted to see his first born much less his youngest son. He'd been strong for his brother, but he remembered his pain boiling over, the tears rolling down his cheeks as he cried out, wishing things would be better, that he could heal the hurt his father left on his family. (Y/n) didn't understand why he couldn't shut off his feelings for Jonathan, he'd done it for so long it felt like he was being overwhelmed with sympathy, wanting to comfort him even after the hurt he'd caused so long ago.

He wasn't ready to forgive, but maybe, just for the moment, he'd forget.

"Now that's your mother talking right there, she even know you're here?"

Jonathan spotted (Y/n), his father turned following his sons eyes.

"The fucks that?"

"A friend.."

' *Wouldn't call me that Byers, looking more like a criminal right now'*

"Oh shit is that who I think it is?"

He turned back Jonathan, he obviously tried to say it quieter but (Y/n) still heard.

“You still hang out with that fairy after all this time?”

(Y/n) ground his teeth and Jonathan sighed, ignoring the comment, (Y/n) didn’t expect the comment and he didn’t expect Jonathan to defend him either, he stopped defending him a long time ago.

“Well great, one kid goes missing and the other runs wild, some real fine parenting right there.”

Jonathan looked angrily at his shoes, blowing air through his nostrils, (Y/n) could tell he was trying to hold words back.

“Look, I’m just saying maybe I’m not the asshole.”

‘*Yeah right*’

Jonathan reached into his bag, grabbing a piece of paper before shoving it into his father’s chest.

“In case you forgot what he looks like.”

(Y/n) realized he’d left his father a missing poster, (Y/n) hoped it would stir some kind of guilt in the scumbag. (Y/n) passed the man to follow Jonathan, but Lonnie latched onto his bicep, he felt his warm breath on his ear.

“You, don’t you let me catch you on my property ever again, I can get over my kid barging in but not someone like you snooping around, lucky I don’t call the damn cops.”

(Y/n) scoffed as he ripped his arm away from his grip, he had half a mind to give the guy the finger for the ‘someone like you’ comment, but he decided against it, catching up to Jonathan and getting the hell out of here was more worth his time.

It was silent in the car, (Y/n) didn’t know what to say, Will hadn’t been there, Will was still missing, and Jonathan’s father had really

just hammered another nail in the coffin of his relationship with his eldest son.

The music played quietly, they were still a half hour out of Hawkins when Jonathan suddenly pulled over.

He gripped the steering wheel, pressing his forehead against it as the rain pounded against the wind shield.

Jonathan was muttering and (Y/n) didn't know what to do, it used to feel like he always knew what to do with Jonathan before, but he realized after what happened back there he wasn't the only one who'd changed, even if some of the same Jonathan was there but he wasn't 14 anymore, and (Y/n) wasn't really willing to do all the things he did to comfort Jonathan back then.

He remembered in seventh grade, it was Will's 9th birthday, he'd waited out for Lonnie all day, sitting on the porch, hoping to hear his car coming up the driveway any moment, Jonathan checked on him now and then but as night came he ushered him inside, his mother had gathered a small array of presents and made him his favorite cake, Joyce was the sweetest mother (Y/n) had ever met he knew it must have broke her heart to see her son disappointed, Jonathan said he saw Will smiling but he knew as he'd heard sniffles coming from his brothers room he'd been hurt. Jonathan had held his brother until he fell asleep, he'd snuck out after, biking out to (Y/n)'s House.

(Y/n) had been watching a horror flick, it was Saturday night and his Dad was going to be out of town for the night, he had to drive up to Kansas to pick up a part for the shop, it was gonna take too long to ship so he'd been spending the night in a motel and heading back in the morning. (Y/n) didn't mind being alone, he did it a lot as a kid after his mom left, but he felt himself jolt in fear worse than the movie could've caused as a banging came on his door. (Y/n) was cautious as he check the peephole, he saw Jonathan out on his porch, his bike thrown in his front yard, he leaned up against the door, playing with the hem of his ringer shirt.

(Y/n) opened the door, already asking if Will had enjoyed the card he made him for his birthday when he realized Jonathan's eyes were ringed red.

“He did it again.”

“Jon what-“

“He did it again, he stood Will up again, and I can get over him flaking out on me but not Will.”

(Y/n) heard gore and screams bleeding in from his tv as Jonathan looked so tense in his doorway, it was late and he knew Joyce probably didn't know he was here. (Y/n) knew what it was like to have one parent, but his mom never tried to come back or lied she would be coming around, she'd been absolutely silent since she walked out while Lonnie kept strolling back in when it was convenient.

“Come in Jon..you want a soda or something would that make you feel better?”

“I'd feel better if he'd just make up his mind, get in or get out yknow?”

(Y/n) nodded as Jonathan slinked inside, he'd ranted and cried and eventually fell asleep with (Y/n) stroking his hair on his couch, his legs were numb and that was the last of his favorite soda but he didn't care, as long as Jonathan felt better, he'd give up anything.

Something fluttered again in his chest at the memory, it made him ashamed as he saw the pain in Jonathan's eyes. Maybe he couldn't quite give like he used to, but he could be a human being and let Jonathan know he wasn't alone.

He rubbed Jonathan's back, it felt a little awkward at first but Jonathan's shoulders stopped shaking, that was something at least.

“He's such an asshole, he doesn't even care his sons missing.”

“We care, your mom cares, we're gonna find, him, he doesn't deserve your frustration, Jon.”

“I know, but I can't help it sometimes, how the hell can you have a

kid and just fuck off for 6 years and then not even call back when something goes wrong.”

(Y/n) was thinking the same thing

*‘How can you hear your kids missing and just do nothing?’*

“I don’t know Jon..”

You both just sat there for a while, not really sure what to do, what was there to do? (Y/n) felt like Jonathan needed a minute to breathe, to think of the next step here, so they listened to the music flitting from the speakers as the rain fell down.

The rain stopped and the boys were back on the road quick, Jonathan had finally had an idea.

“If I go in the woods I can take pictures of where we looked we might’ve missed something, there’s gotta be some kind of evidence the police didn’t catch.”

(Y/n) wasn’t sure how much it would do as the sun was going down but Jonathan was already pulling into his front yard, his Dad was home earlier than usual and he was afraid of what that might mean.

(Y/n) began to unbuckle and grab his bag, he said a quick goodbye before Jonathan grabbed his bicep.

“(Y/n) wait.”

(Y/n) turned back, Jonathan’s face was shadowed by the sun setting behind his properties trees, his wispy brown hair falling over his black eyes, (Y/n) felt his heart speed up.

“Thanks for being there today..for helping I mean, it meant a lot.”

“No problem Jonathan.”

He smiled and (Y/n) couldn’t take it, he had to go.

“Good luck with your pictures.”

Jonathan looked like he wanted to say more but (Y/n) rushed out of the car, he couldn't deal with that, that smile, the familiarity of his face, the way it made him feel. (Y/n) knew better, he knew better but he let his stupid sympathetic heart lead him around down the wrong path.

He was doing this for Will, he was going to look and search for Will until he was safe. The second he knew things were back to normal, this truce between him and Jonathan would be severed.

It had to be.

He wasn't ready to forgive, and he wasn't sure he'd ever forget.

(Y/n)'s Dad seemed oblivious to the fact that his son had skipped school, he was only home to pick up some documents he'd left behind, (Y/n) was relieved to be alone and to go unpunished.

He was cleaning the downstairs bathroom, cleaning was one of the things he could do to get his mind off things. Sometimes it weirded (Y/n) out to realize the reason he cleaned, watched all those late night movies and read his comics were to avoid his thoughts, once they were of his mother, now they were of Jonathan.

The way Jonathan had smiled at him after 2 years.

He couldn't help it, he felt his heart beat, his palms began to sweat as he scrubbed harder at the tub, the smell of chemicals distracting him for a moment.

(Y/n) had a few crushes before Jonathan, but Jonathan was always the one he'd come back to, at least before they went separate ways.

He never told anyone, it was middle school and everyone was in that in between line, some were already falling victim to young puppy love of summer romance and others weren't quite ready to transition from childhood to the realm of being a teenager. Suddenly everyone was talking about girls while (Y/n) buried his nose in a paperback,

never really finding interest in that sort of thing.

But then people became interested in why he wasn't interested.

(Y/n) had his own little group away from Jonathan, there was Jimmy Forester, Duke Hanson, Conroy Wilson, and occasionally Nathan Miller, he mostly knew them from shop class and the occasional after school hang out, they'd cornered him after school one day and badgered him relentlessly wanting to know what was up.

"C'mon (Y/n), you can't keep it secret forever, which girl catches your fancy." Jimmy had asked

(Y/n) sweated as they all looked at him expectantly, he didn't understand why they were so interested.

"Maybe (Y/n)'s too good for any of the girls here, bet he likes the ones in the big city." Conroy accused

(Y/n) traveled more than anyone in town with his dad, he always came back with a souvenir and a story, out of jealousy all the other boys started calling him a wannabe city boy, was it really so wrong to want to leave Hawkins someday?

"Maybe (Y/n) just doesn't like girls." Duke snickered

Everyone laughed, they started pushing Duke, telling him not to be an asshole, saying there was no way (Y/n) could be a fag. (Y/n) felt fear in his heart as he tried to laugh it off, but Nate gave him a look that scared him, like he knew something.

They both kept quiet.

"C'mon (Y/n) just tell us, we swear we won't tell nobody."

(Y/n) swallowed, trying not to panic, he just had to play it off, just say a girl, any girl and they'd get over it. He thought around to all the girls in his classes, who would be believable?

He couldn't say Lucille as Duke would knock his teeth in for looking at his girl, Jean Sawyer was pretty but as tall as a high school boy, he didn't think he had any options but then it hit him.

"Alright you got me, I don't like to cause a big fuss and y'all know that but..I like Maureen."

The boys erupted in hoots and hollers, Maureen was one of the richer girls at Hawkins middle school, she had pretty dark lashes and her hair was black ringlets that swayed down to her shoulders, she was like a doll.

But that's all she was to (Y/n), she sat in front of him in math class, she was aesthetically what everyone would expect him to like.

But little did they know he'd rather have Jonathan with bedhead and morning breath than Maureen dressed to impress any day.

They'd all decided to go to the general store to loiter after school, (Y/n) passed, saying he had plans to go down to the creek with Jonathan already. They teased him one last time about his 'crush' and headed off.

(Y/n) sat alone, Jonathan was probably helping someone out or talking to a teacher but he could wait, he didn't want to be alone.

But then Nathan sat down.

Nathan had dirty blonde hair and these sea green eyes that made (Y/n) look away, a lot of the girls at school had crushes on him, (Y/n) would be a liar to say he didn't understand why. Nate played baseball and was generally just a good guy, everyone wanted to be friends with him.

But the way he was looking at (Y/n) scared him.

"You don't like Maureen, do you (Y/n)?"

He was shocked, (Y/n) could always roll with the punches, it's how he kept his secret so well, but Nathan seemed to see right through him like glass.

"What're you talking about Nate?"

"(Y/n) I've been watching you, I know you better than you might think, you make yourself really hard to know but I know you..and I

think what Duke said might have some truth to it.”

(Y/n) felt shame burning inside him, he wanted to run away, he thought he'd been so careful.

“Don’t get all spooked on me now..I’m not gonna tell nobody.”

How could he trust that? How did he know that for sure?

“Why wouldn’t you? What’s keeping you from telling everyone?”

“Because I’m just like you.”

That just about knocked (Y/n) out of his seat, he wasn’t sure he’d heard right but Nathan was scribbling something down on a piece of notebook paper, and shoving it in his hand.

“I told the boys I came back for a book so I gotta go meet them before they get suspicious, I’ll see you (Y/n).”

And then he was off, leaving (Y/n) devastated yet so relieved. There was someone just like him.

And he was awful cute.

(Y/n) unfolded the paper to read what Nate had written.

*‘Meet me in the thicket behind your dad’s shop, we can talk more then.’*

(Y/n) had known there were other people like him by then, he’d read about Mr. Harvey Milk from San Francisco in a newspaper clipping at the library when he was 13, he knew he’d been assassinated 2 years before he read about it, but it still stirred something in him then, knowing there was so many like him that they’d rioted and demanded their rights. Nathan’s confession still affected him now.

He rinsed the soap and bleach down the drain, watching it spiral away like he wished these feelings would.

There wasn’t enough house to clean to get Jonathan off his mind. The

sound of the phone ringing cut through from down stairs, he rushed up to answer it.

He prayed it was anyone other than Jonathan.

(Y/n) wiped his hands off on his pants as he grabbed the phone off the receiver.

"Hello?"

"(Y/n)? It's barb."

Barb didn't call very often, (Y/n) would've been happy if she didn't sound so down.

"What's up B? Are you okay?"

"Yeah yeah I'm fine..I'm just at this party with Nancy and she's acting weird."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know..I'm gonna try to convince her to get out of here, she's just all over Steve and his jerk friends are here..I feel out of place."

(Y/n) sighed, something felt off about this call, he had a bad feeling.

"Yeah you should try to get out of there, try to talk to her, sorry you're stuck with those assholes Barb, you can come over here if you want you know I'm always down to party."

Barb laughed over the line

"Maybe, she's coming back inside, I'll let you know alright?"

"Alright, see you later Barb."

"See you (Y/n)."

(Y/n) hung up and decided to start making a late dinner for himself and his dad.

He couldn't shake that terrible feeling at the pit of his stomach.

(Y/n) tried to wait up for barb, his father even passing him as he began to doze on the couch, he laid a heavy green blanket atop the boy, the TVs dialogue flickering and flitting into his ear as his lids grew heavier with each commercial. He'd still been reluctant to sleep but the cold house was beginning to become less and less scary.

More just surreal if anything.

(Y/n) woke in an unfamiliar place, syrupy air enveloping his lungs, the ground beneath him hard and manmade, the sky was full of dark clouds that only revealed color when thunder pressed it through the bleak clouds. (Y/n) sat up, realizing as he saw the ladder, he was in the bottom of a swimming pool.

He began to stumble over vines and uprooted concrete, his teeth chattering as he tried to retain warmth.

He almost wished to be back in the cold house.

(Y/n) began to climb the ladder, wrenching at the feeling of some kind of slime beneath his fingertip, cobwebs clinging to his charcoal grey sweatshirt, he heard a wet throaty wretch coming from above and felt fear strike into his heart as he continued up the rungs of the ladder, unsure what else to do. As he finally climbed from the wrecked husk of the pool he heard the screech again from behind him.

(Y/n) looked to the tree line, there was a creature there, holding something, large and limp. He felt his legs shake from fear rather than the cold, his eyes trailed down to the bottom of the pool.

A cracked pair of pink glasses.

(Y/n)'s lip quivered, something in his heart felt this was real, it was too real.

*“Barb?”*

(Y/n) woke up startled and yelling, yelling out for Barb, his father was shaking him, tears slid down the boys cheeks as he held tightly to his father, sobbing in a way he hadn't in a long time.

“She's gone dad something bad happened-“

(Y/n)'s father didn't understand he was crying about a girl he was sure had just been lost, and not a woman that had left them both so long ago, he cradled his son, believing they had the same horrible dreams left in the wake of her abandonment.

“It's alright son, I got you.”

(Y/n) continued to cry, he knew it was just a dream, it just had to be a dream.

But Barb never stopped by the house with Nancy.

(Y/n) knew in his heart he'd never see Barb again.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Pulling back the curtain just a smidge on what lead up to the boys falling out this chapter.

Lots more Barb and Nancy coming up

Sweet Dreams- Eurythmics

### **Author's Note:**

The Smiths- William, It was Really Nothing  
<https://youtu.be/C3PSzxRUTQw>

First chapter out of the way, had it stored away for a couple months, hope you enjoy